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FANTASY BOOK ILLUSTRATION AND DESIGN

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Abstract

This thesis considers illustrating the fantasy book, *The Story of a Past Future*, written by the author. The goals were to make illustrations for the book and a map of the world in which the story is happening as well as design the book layout and the cover. This document covers illustration in general, in the fantasy field and in digital environments. It also considers making a book cover.

In the first part knowledge about illustration and fantasy art is provided through a research of relevant literature. Next, the considerations about the book cover, illustrations and the author's entire illustration process are described. This part is practical and is done through drawing, painting and graphical design. In the last part the author evaluates the results and achievements by comparing the theory and practice.

The goals demanded a lot of work, but the author was satisfied with the results. The illustrations and book design were made and the author's illustrations after the process were visibly improved compared to the author's earlier work. The author developed her own illustration process and learned new ways to make digital paintings.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Even though illustrations in fiction books (except children's books) are rare, they are quite popular in the fantasy genre. Places and creatures from other worlds and different times are interesting to see, and even if illustrations do not completely fit with the image of reader, it still ignites the imagination. Imagination is needed for a fantasy book so the reader can be taken into another world.

Graphic design and illustration are two highly related fields. Often illustration is even considered as a part of graphic design, but it can be also viewed closer to artwork. Both graphic design and illustration mean making visualisations for a special purpose. Illustration itself is about making a drawing or a painting for a special purpose, usually for customer. In this sense illustration is similar to graphic design – both illustrator and graphic designer have to do their work according to customer's specifications. But illustration has usually less borders. In addition to a sense for aesthetic illustrator needs also drawing skills.

Even though graphic design is possible without illustration, drawing skills are often needed anyway. For some graphic design fields illustrators are preferred before graphic designers with no or little knowledge of drawing. Even though the book design itself (placing text and making a book cover) does not necessary need drawing skills, publishing houses prefer to take designers with illustration skills if possible to make unique covers and make illustrations for books.

1.1 Personal motivation and goals

When I applied to the Design studies my goal was to become a book designer. I have already education from Book Publishing. In those previous studies I learned about book editing, important considerations and business approach to

book publishing. In my thesis on Master's Degree level I compared Finnish and Slovenian book market and book covers in both countries. Thus I already have some knowledge in this field, but from the different perspective. With Design studies I wanted to develop my visualisation skills to achieve my professional goal. As I started studying I tried to specialise in graphic design, which includes also book design. Later I realised that illustration is my strength, so I wanted to make a thesis that would fit to my goals and improve my skills.

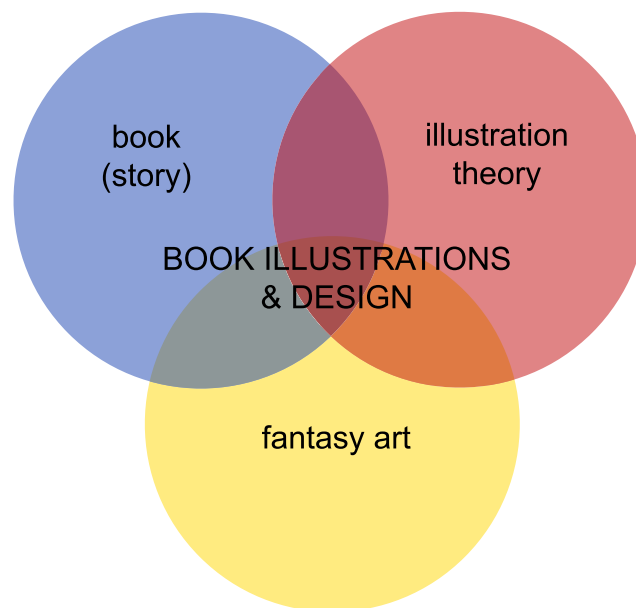
One of my hobbies is book writing and currently I am writing a fantasy book called *The Story of a Past Future*. Since I would have to make the book cover anyway and I wanted to develop my illustration skills I decided to make a cover and illustrations for the book as my thesis subject. At the end I decided to make also an example of a book opening, which means I wanted to design the book layout.

My goal is therefore to find my own illustration style and make the cover, map of the fantasy world and illustrations for *The Story of a Past Future*. The illustrations should fit with the text and the cover should gain the potential reader or buyer's attention. With this process I would also like to develop myself as an illustrator.

1.2 Framework and structure

My fantasy book is happening in a world called Terra. The story is about good and bad and the issues of society. I was trying to make the book cover and map of Terra already few years ago, but I was not satisfied with the result. My goal for this thesis is thus to make a better cover and redraw the map. I will make also illustrations that will be inside the book. All the works should be made in the same technique and style. At the end I will design also an example opening of the book. The most important for my visualisations is that they will fit to the story. Book cover is often a first contact of a book and potential buyer or reader, so it is essential that it sends right message and attracts right audience.

My framework thus consists of three main parts (Picture 1). One of them is book story, which is the base of illustrations for this thesis. The next part is illustration theory, which brings an important knowledge for good and strong illustrations. The last part is fantasy art, the genre in which my illustrations fall. In this paper I will focus on fantasy art development.



Picture 1. Thesis framework

The structure of my thesis is following: first I will research and write about the fantasy digital illustration and book covers. In this theoretical part I will put illustration in graphic design context. Then I will write about the fantasy illustration's development and its place in art field. For those two steps my knowledge base will come mostly from relevant literature. Next I will describe book covers and their importance. In this part I will use both my knowledge from Book Publishing studies and knowledge from relevant books and articles. After that I will study literature and write about digital illustration in general. Here I will describe also the basic of illustration theory and its making. At the end I will write about some ethical issues illustrators and designers can face. This part will consist both of my own knowledge and relevant literature.

A part after the research will be about my practical process. I will start developing my own illustration style and technique. I will do this with a lot of drawing and reading some tutorial literature. When I will decide about the final visual style for the book I will make illustrations, cover and the example layout. I will write about my style development, illustrating process and the final results. Then, in the last part, I will discuss the improvement and achievement.

2 ILLUSTRATION

Illustration is a wide concept. It can be a form of visual communication, a problem solving activity, or a means of social commentary. It can also be applied art in a commercial context, or a popular narrative art. In the design context it is often referred to as image making; a specialism or adjunct of the hybrid discipline of graphic design. In some views all contemporary art and design is illustration.

Official English description (Oxford Dictionary 2015) of a word “illustration” is:

- 1 A picture illustrating a book, newspaper, etc.
- 2 The action or fact of illustrating something

“Illustration” falls into category of “artwork” (Oxford Dictionary 2015):

1 Illustrations, photographs, or other non-textual material prepared for inclusion in a publication.

On the other side, description of “graphic design” is following (Oxford Dictionary 2015):

The art or skill of combining text and pictures in advertisements, magazines, or books.

In the context of those description illustration is an artwork and it can be a tool for graphic design (picture). Illustration has also some features of graphic

design, as for example working for a customer, and can be considered as a part of graphic design (Bordelon 2015). In conclusion, illustration has features of both artwork and graphic design.

Illustration must communicate and it is combining imagination, creativity, skill and craft to tell the stories visually and create new worlds. Illustration can be powerful, satirical, subversive, decorative, intimate, humorous, intelligent, allusive, inspiring, charming, beautiful, life-affirming and spiritually enriching. (Wigan 2008, 14.) Illustration is a personal visual language (Wigan 2008, 18).

The following, theoretical part of my thesis, consists of five parts. First I will present development and forms of fantasy art. After that I will consider book covers and their roles. Later I will write about digital illustration and its impact on the illustration field, and describe the process of making a digital art. In the last part I will consider ethical issues connected to the illustration field.

2.1 Fantasy art then and now

The word “fantasy” brings to mind in many dragons, princesses, pixies and wizards, and to others the unreal worlds such as those of Brueghel, Bosch and the Surrealists. Of course both can be also mixed. (Jude 2003.)

Fantasy art was found already with the paintings at Altamira and Lascaux. People tried to explain the nature, mysteries of biosphere, disasters etc. Explorers returned from their journeys with tales of all kinds of creatures, and while they were recreated after, a lot of people sincerely believed in them. One of these symbols is a dragon, found on so many pictures, carvings and tales that a complete stranger to our planet would surely believe they existed. With the Renaissance, art became more stylized with rules for composition and presenting characters. Artists started to use a lot of symbols – in Europe mostly from the Bible – that some education was needed if one wanted to understand the meaning. In the 19th and 20th centuries great schools of art were released.

Exploration brought the art from Japan and Africa, which became quite noticeable among European artists – Impressionists, Cubists, etc. Surrealism started to portray images straight from subconscious. Thus in the 1900s fantasy art as we know today was finally born, and with it a major genre of literature. Much art became even more fantastic and otherworldly with the conventional rules of perspective and classical composition discarded in search of a more honest form of picture making. (Jude 2003.)

The “Digital revolution” came just about a century after factories produced illustrated books and magazines, and British invented dust jackets, started to prosper. During “The Golden Age” of American illustration (around 1880-1930) illustrators and artists became nationally renowned from popular magazines and books. But already by the 1970s the separation between pulp fiction magazines art and fine art became distinct, and disposable paperback books that replaced them carried a negative image about genre art. The art was often unsigned and unaccredited. Despite that, fantasy and science illustration art spread everywhere. The mass media gave a worldwide attention to games and other entertainment (Star Trek, Dungeons & Dragons, Star Wars), comics and anime, and suddenly such things became collectable. Nowadays it seems only science fiction, fantasy and children’s books remain as the last bastions for painted illustration. However, even with the recent popular movies such as Lord of the Rings and Harry Potter, when international demand became bigger, the fantasy paintings are still disdained by the art establishment. The reason is that they are populist in appeal, and because commissioned art affords relatively little creative freedom. Also the big threat to respectability is the forces triggering new outlets for creativity, and digitalization. (Frank 2007, 10-12.)

2.2 Book cover

The old phrase “never judge a book by its cover” can be true in some circumstances. However, first impressions last. The book cover is a lot of times the first thing people will see, and it can determine if they will bother to take the book in hands and read further. (Bhaskaran 2006, 46.)

The publishing houses Orion and Penguin made a research in bookshops where they tried to find out how book covers impact book purchasing. They put in shops two editions of books with different covers. The researchers found out that covers are first thing potential buyers notice from a book (if they have not decided before they came to the bookshop what book they want). If people have two different editions of a book, they will buy the one that attracts them more. (Clark & Philips 2008.) Another relevant research has been done by Ipsos BookTrends (2003) in 1997-2002. The organization sent diaries to households in the USA each month, and the households wrote about every book purchased. The research results showed that the reason for purchasing a book was in most cases amongst adults (aged 18 or more) book cover design (approx. 21% of cases), and amongst younger individuals (14-17 years old) it was recommendation (approx. 32 % of cases). Amongst younger individuals the cover design was in second place (approx. 22 % of cases).

A book cover is not just a graphic representation of its content but also shows the cultural ideals and aesthetics of a historical moment. Books and their covers show the evolving intellectual tradition. They define what we were, what we hoped to be, and sometimes, what we have become. (Drew & Sternberger 2005, 8-10.)

As Andrew Loomis (1947, 265) states, some of the essential functions of book cover are:

- It must be quickly seen, and the title read.
- Title is more important than anything else.
- It must be seen from some distance.
- The cover should be as exciting as possible (awake curiosity, stimulate interest and promise entertainment or information).

Cover designs are not just about looking good: they also have to communicate what the book is about. Good cover design has to send the right message to

the right audience in the right way, and do so as clearly as possible. (Bhaskaran 2006, 46.)

One way the cover can differ from others is to use different material. The use of materials other than paper is getting more popular. However, printing technology and expenses have to be considered. (Gordon & Gordon 2004, 60.)

When designing a publication, a hierarchy has to be considered. Generally the larger and more dominant element has a higher position in the hierarchy. The most important elements have to be viewed so the reader can pick them quickly and easily. The text, together with the graphic elements, needs to be organised in a logical and reader-friendly manner. Good design means having a correct balance between designing a strong layout and a clear hierarchical structure that is both easy to read and a pleasure to look at. (Bhaskaran 2006, 60-61.)

When making a publication design, the listed areas can affect the finished design:

- format
- typography
- colour
- use of imagery. (Bhaskaran 2006, 8)

A designer always needs to think about the whole layout of the cover. The text should be positioned correctly and be easy and clear to read.

As usual, the best idea is to keep it simple and effective. The illustrator must consider the book title first – how long it is and where it can be put. After that the cover illustration should be considered. The illustration can contribute largely to the attention and interest in the jacket and the ultimate sale of the book. The illustration on the book cover displays the product at the point of sale. (Loomis 1947, 265.)

Generally, an image has a very short amount of time to send its message, so the designer has to consider what the most suitable image type can be. The

most popular type of image used today is photography. (Bhaskaran 2006, 74-75.)

2.3 Digital illustration

Within the illustration field changes have spread rapidly over the last few decades. Even those illustrators who still stick to the “traditional” methods often use digital media, such as scanning or photographing their works for documenting and archiving. A lot of them use also mixed media – starting their works with hand sketches, paintings or drawings, and then complete it with computer. Others create completely digital media, using a graphics tablet, or create art that is purely computer-generated. While those methods do not matter for costumers, as far as products are well marketed, it matters for those involved in the book and magazine publishing industry, and for art directors. For those, it is a matter of economics. (Frank 2007, 10.)

Software that allows manipulations with photographs, drawings, paintings etc., became really popular and relatively easily available in the last decade. With it one is able to create art baring little resemblance to the original, and simulate electronic versions of artistic techniques and surface textures, accomplished before only by hand painting. Many illustrators adopted new techniques, which opened new horizons of artistic possibility. Those new options are really visible among freelance illustrators in the genre of science fiction and fantasy. Some even make their living this way, creating artwork for use in print and literary media. (Frank 2007, 10.)

2.4 Creating a digital illustration

As Mark Wigan (2006, 13) states, an illustrator should think visually and practice that skill daily. An illustrator must be observant, listen, look and participate in the world. An illustrator should also be interested in humanity and

literature. The essentials are intellectual curiosity, hard work, ambition and passion.

The search for successful concepts comes from generating a lot of ideas. An illustrator can make combinations and links and try something new. Of course generating a lot of images is helpful.

Before the real work starts some research can help with ideation and finding out what a customer actually wants. Other than searching books, magazines and the Internet, a personal camera can also be useful. It is easy to take pictures whenever one sees something inspiring. Another important tool is, of course, the sketchbook, where an illustrator can experiment and visualize everyday things. (Wigan 2006.) One can then follow the ideas, look for the obvious, and try to make it differently. An illustrator should also realize what time and place are the best for him or her to get an inspiration. (Oldach 1995, 44-55.)

After an illustrator gets the final idea the drawing process starts. Illustration is about finding one's own vision. Experimentation enables an illustrator to rethink, reinvent and rediscover a unique personal vision. This includes play and experimentation with ideas, form, colour and composition, and with contexts and content. The best is if the illustrator is original in approach and develops a personal creative visual language. It might take some trials before the final illustration is made. (Wigan 2006.)

With the words "digital illustration" we can understand different things: digital painting (bitmap illustration), vector illustration (drawing), 3D modelling or animation (Caplin and Banks 2003). This study will concentrate on digital painting, even though that can also be combined with other techniques, as will be explained later.

Digital painting is today mostly done in Adobe Photoshop program, using a graphic tablet. Photoshop is offering a superb combination of power, reliability and ease of use. (Caplin and Banks 2003.) Probably the most important are brushes, which represent strokes from natural media very well. There are a lot

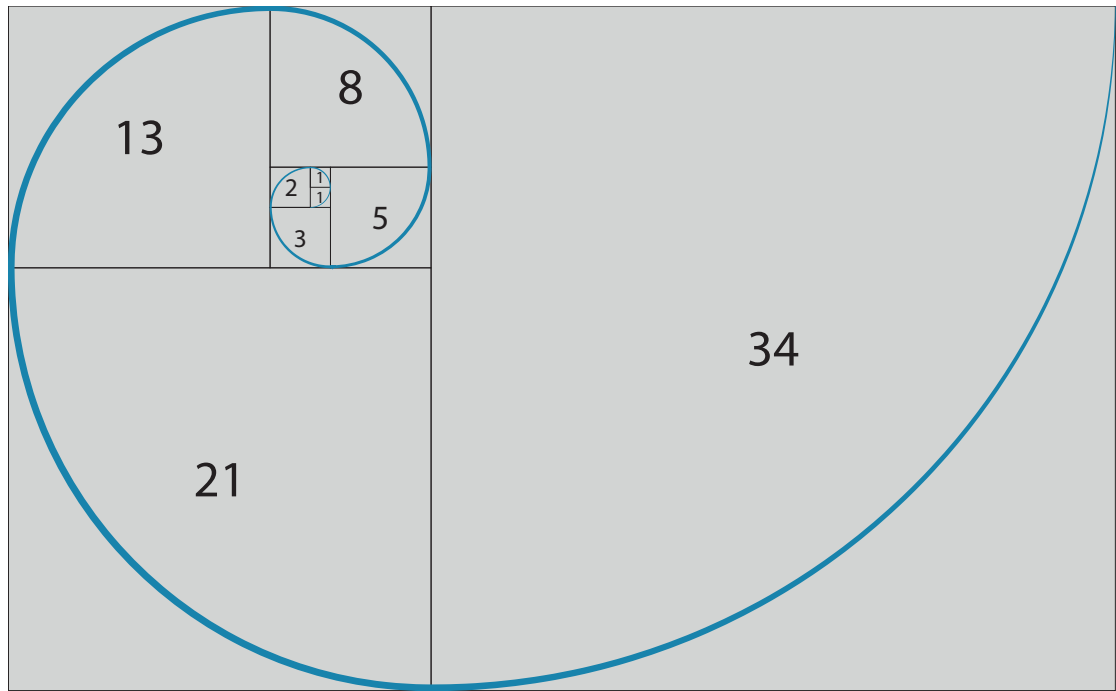
of different brush sets to choose from, with many options to customize them. In combination with the proper graphic tablet the brushes can behave in an organic way, so that the thickness, opacity and texture is depending on a pressure and angle of a graphic pen. One can make also custom brushes from any image – from scribbles to photos and scanned textures (Beginner's Guide to Digital Painting in Photoshop 2014). The other thing that makes digital illustration unique are Photoshop Layers that made adjusting layout, editing just one item on painting, or deleting an object, much easier.

Following I will describe a digital illustration process and tools.

2.4.1 Sketching and composition

There are different ways of how to start a digital painting. It can be started with a sketch on paper (with for example pencils) and then scanned or photographed to be turned digital. The other way is to sketch with drawing lines directly through a graphic tablet in Photoshop. The third popular option is to splash the paint on digital canvas, again directly through graphic tablet, to get a basic composition. (Beginner's Guide to Digital Painting in Photoshop 2014.)

Thus composition is usually the first thing artists consider when making a painting. Careful combination of solid perspective, balanced composition and great depth itself can make a great painting. As is present in many biological contexts (flowers, trees, the arrangement of leaves on a stem, etc.), the Fibonacci sequence or "Golden sections" (Picture 2) are also appealing in painting. Golden section was already used by the ancient Egyptians (for example the Great Pyramid). Pythagoras, the Greek geometer, was really interested in golden sections and proved that it was the basis for the proportions of the human figure. After this discovery Greeks used golden sections in every part of their buildings, down to the smallest detail. (Britton 2012)



Picture 2. Fibonacci sequence

Derived from the golden rectangle is the "rule of thirds", where one divides canvas with three diagonal and three horizontal lines. Where the lines intersect are four power points, which are ideal for positioning a point of interest or focal point. (Beginner's Guide to Digital Painting in Photoshop 2014) The focal point is the part of picture that grabs viewers' attention at first. For simple images this is the part that is the most interesting to look at, and for more complex compositions one focal point should lead a viewer's eye to the next (Tonge 2011). However, composition is something organic that becomes more intuitive with practice. The rules of course do not need to always apply. One can use also some "tricks" in addition to basic composition, for example with contrast that leads the eye, a frame on an image (this is often used on book covers), a vignette (blur on the edges), tilting the image etc. Simple compositions can be sometimes the most effective – for example perspective can lead the viewer into the picture and towards a focal point. (Beginner's Guide to Digital Painting in Photoshop 2014.)

2.4.2 Perspective and depth

Perspective and depth are two of the most important things to master in creating believable images (Tonge 2011, 47). Perspective is showing the scale and distance of a subject. It is an illusion of a third dimension in a two-dimensional representation. Real visual success is achieved when perspective is used to create believable depth. The illusion of depth is a combination of perspective, shape, light, value, hue, saturation etc. (Beginner's Guide to Digital Painting in Photoshop 2014.)

One or more origin points can be used for perspective. In practice it is possible to estimate perspective, but often it is still better to use construction a line when working on a detailed piece (Tonge 2011, 48). A painter has to create a rhythm that the human brain understands. It is for example very helpful to create some big, guiding elements and a lot of smaller elements that keep explaining the position in space. The ground plane can be used that continues into depth to show certain objects having the same size (like trees or houses). With this depth is easy to achieve. It is also useful to put a small detail in the foreground that will indicate the size of human, so our brain can understand it. (Beginner's Guide to Digital Painting in Photoshop 2014, 80.)

The basic of perspective is the horizon, which is always at eye level. An easy way to create an illusion is with layers – putting something on top of something else (Picture 3). This way one creates planes: the first plane or foreground with many details; the second plane or mid-ground that contains just a few big details, and the third plane or background has little or no details. Usually the foreground is the darkest, the mid-ground medium and the background light. However, this can change depending on from where the light comes from. (Beginner's Guide to Digital Painting in Photoshop 2014.)



Picture 3. Foreground, mid-ground and background values

Important for depth is also the colour hue (Picture 4). For example a blue spectrum in the background makes for more depth than red. As for saturation, it mostly decreases when objects are further away and depends on the air (clean, dusty, humid etc.), but it does not work that way in every case. One trick in creating depth is also the use of fog. (Beginner's Guide to Digital Painting in Photoshop 2014.)



Picture 4. Hue of different planes

2.4.3 Colour and lightning

I will not go in details about e.g. colour theory, since those are the very basics that every artist should know. I will write just shortly what colours and lighting do to a painting and why they are important.

Colours on an image create an atmosphere and different emotions with which a painting is trying to communicate. Purple, blue and green feel cool, while red, orange and yellow are warm and can implicate also emotions, even aggression. If a painter wants some object to “stand out” in a painting, he can use

complementary colours. As already mentioned in the section about perspective, cold colours give more depth to a picture than warm ones. (Tonge 2011.)

However we use them, one has to consider which colours and to what extent to use in a single painting, so the image will not be messy and lead the viewer's eye to focal points. On book covers, for example, the colour scheme should be simple but striking (e.g. using complementary colours). (Beginner's Guide to Digital Painting in Photoshop 2014.)

Another important aspect is lightning. Light is the origin of all art. When painting, one has to consider the light sources on the image, from where light is coming, at what angle it comes from, what the colour of light is etc. Lightning is important again to lead the viewer to the important points on painting. (Tonge 2011.)

The elements on which the light is shining (let it be sun or artificial light, on an actual painting or imaginary) are brighter and more or less saturated than the rest of the painting, depending on the situation. Light is seen differently on different materials, so the painter must consider the effect on each object.

Light and darkness make contrast on an image. With the proper use of contrast one can make interesting parts of an image stand out. Again the light and dark create an atmosphere of a painting.

2.4.4 Tools and finishing

One thing that makes digital painting easier from hand painting is that one can paint each object in different layers, using the Layers tool. This allows reviewing the painting easily and adjusting sizes, position, colours, etc. of objects without a problem.

As already mentioned, diverse brushes are powerful Photoshop tools. One option here is texture brushes, made from photos or images. This way a painter

can easily create quite realistic e.g. stone, marble or wood textures. Of course they can be hand-painted, but textures make a job much easier and less time-consuming. (Beginner's Guide to Digital Painting in Photoshop 2014, 44.)

Filters, which give a lot of different options, are also useful. One of them is the Liquify filter, which can make for example a pattern on a textile to follow the folds. With filters one can sharpen the image (or part of it), blur it, distort it, stylize it etc. (Beginner's Guide to Digital Painting in Photoshop 2014, 47.)

After an artist is done with the actual painting part, some finalisations can be made. For each object separately or all together the painter can adjust levels (the grey tones), saturation, hue and balance colours. Filters can also be used at the end, for example to blur some parts, or use filter gallery to add texture over painting or to make it seen like it was hand-painted with certain techniques.

2.5 Ethical considerations

Ethics is a complex subject that interlaces the idea of responsibilities to society with a wide range of considerations relevant to the character and happiness of the individual (Wigan 2009, 178). Ethics are moral concerns about the effects of our actions on others and personal concerns about integrity. The moral considerations in ethics are the most important. Some of them, like plagiarism, are regulated by governments and laws. But others remain open to debate. For example, maybe one does not want to work with a company that uses child labour or helps cut the rainforest.

However, it seems that plagiarism is not so hard to find. I was surprised when a client for whom I was making a book cover illustration, told me that I should copy more the style and even characters of a particular artist because most designers do so. The question becomes: is this ethical, even if it is permitted by law to some extent? And how far can one go with that? In digital illustration it is possible to use custom made brushes and textures that can be taken from other

images. Usually it is really hard to notice the source of such details, but is it ethical to steal other people's photographs and illustrations?

As Socrates said, people will naturally do good if they know what is right. But each person can have a different view on what is right. Personal beliefs, lifestyle, nationality, religion, gender, class or education can all influence one's ethical considerations. (Wigan 2009.)

Another consideration for illustrators is also the materials they use for work. This includes the paper, canvas or computer they use and pencils, colours, graphic tablets etc. Paper is made using chemicals in the process, and illustrators can choose the type that is more ecologically friendly. Similar is with colours and pencils. One can also choose graphic tablet and computer from a more eco-friendly producer. Some companies for example recycle and reuse parts from old computers while others choose a cheaper and environment damaging option.

Illustrators have a power to communicate with the world through their creations. This way they can inspire people and help save lives, protect and educate. The illustrator's choice is if he or she wants to simply pursue commercial success, or make a positive contribution. (Wigan 2009.)

3 ILLUSTRATION AND DESIGN PROCESS

3.1 The Story of a Past Future

The Story of a Past Future is a book that I am currently writing. It is a story in a world called Terra, not so much different from ours. In a way the book is a typical fantasy story for teenagers and adults, but it tries to make connections with our world, current social situations, crises and climate changes. Although I know the plot and what is about to happen, the book is still far from finished. In

the start it was being written in Slovenian language, but recently it was changed to English.

When the story begins, dark times come to Terra, and bad things start to happen in the world. Rumours spread about the prophecy that foretells the end of the Age that is about to be fulfilled. Soon Lauri, one of The Chosen Ones, finds out that Liath's skull, a powerful object that folk took as a part of legend, was found again. Lauri tries to find out where the skull is, for whoever owns it gets all the knowledge in the world and thus has the power to destroy it. As dark forces are gathering, Kiram, the power of all the good in Terra is joining together the main figures to create again a balance in the world. Each of the summoned has a different role in the process of transformation, and according to that they are given also their special powers. To fulfil their tasks, Lauri, Elviry, Tarin, Lenore, Arin and Iri travel through many lands, learn about people, themselves and other creatures. If they will succeed, all the beings will live in harmony and peace and take care of each other, but if they fail, the world will be taken by greedy leaders, and eventually Terra will become just another dead planet in the Universe.

My priority from a design point of view is to make a good book cover. I know that in reality it will be hard to publish a book for adults with colour illustrations because of the extra costs. If illustrations will not be possible (at least in the beginning – maybe it will be possible later, but that depends on a market demand), the book needs at least the map of Terra, which can be printed even in black and white.

The illustrations on the cover and inside the book should fit the story and be made in the same style. They should be made for the target book audience – teenagers and adults. The illustrations should complete and visualize the writing.

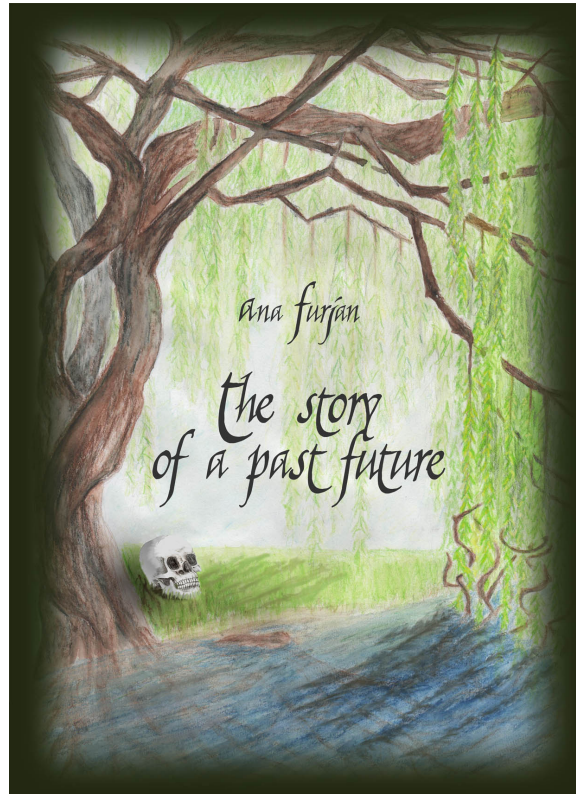
3.2 Developing the style and technique for the book

My first sketches and illustrations from the book story were made in 2011 (Picture 5). They were in various styles and techniques. They were made basically for myself, to visualize the world I had been writing about. I tried to draw portraits of the main characters with pencils and illustrate landscapes and cities with dry pastels and watercolour pencils.



Picture 5. My first drawings from the book - Arin and Iri, two of the main characters (2012). Pencils on A4 paper.

I also drew a map of the world. It was made with colour pencils. Calligraphical text was written on the other paper (the one that was used for the map itself was not suitable for ink), and after they were both put together in Photoshop. I wanted it to look like an old map (Picture 6).



Picture 7. First book cover (2011). Watercolour pencils, pencils, Photoshop.

When I look at those artworks now, I say that they all need some kind of improvement. The sketch of Arin has some proportional issues, whereas Iri's are compositional. The map of Terra needs at least some more colours (or a change in overall colour scheme), and almost everything about the typography on the book cover is just bad.

In 2013 and 2014, I tried to draw both with ink-tense colour pencils and digitally (Picture 8 and Picture 9). Here my style started to develop a bit more. In the end, when I compared the paintings, I decided that I would do my illustrations for the book fully digitally, through the drawing pad and Photoshop. I would need some further development with the ink-tense colour pencils (colours, composition etc.), and digital painting was easier to adjust and add more details, as I was aiming for.



Picture 8. Examples of my watercolour and ink drawings: Coast near the Abandoned Corner (2013) and Arin by the Dragon Mountains (2014).

My digital paintings are still developing as well. I started with quite a simple style (Picture 9), but my works now are a bit more detailed. As it goes with all my paintings, my first digital works had some issues with perspective (especially perspective colours and lighting). I am still sometimes having problems to represent the materials well and paint objects in certain angles.



Picture 9. From the Secret Home (2014), one of the earlier digital paintings for the book.

3.3 My goals for the book illustrations

For my book illustrations my goal was to develop as follows: colours in perspective, add more depth to landscapes, representation of materials and add a bit more details. My older paintings lacked a good representation of perspective because I had problems with using the right colours for the middle ground and background. I was also not satisfied with the depth of my paintings – I wanted to represent vast landscapes as done in romantic era paintings and nowadays fantasy art. An example of one of my trials can be seen on Picture 10. However, the painting still lacks more depth, as was my goal. Next, I wanted different materials to feel like what they really are. For that, one has to observe well how the light reacts with each material, what the structure and texture of material is, how it bends and folds etc. Although I wanted my works to include more details I still did not want them to look too realistic. I like that the paintings

are a bit “artistic”, meaning that they do not look like photographs. In my opinion the paintings should still leave some space for a viewer’s imagination. When I wrote that I wanted more details, I meant just that there would be a certain number of objects on paintings with just a little more detail than what was found in my earlier works.



Picture 10. House by the Lake. Acrylic colours, 2014

Better observation and numerous trials helped me with most of my issues. I was also experimenting with Photoshop and trying out options I did not know existed before. I tried to use the Photoshop 3D option as a basis for buildings and I used self-made brushes.

Other than this, a book called *Beginner’s Guide to Digital Painting in Photoshop* (2014) helped me a lot with tips and tutorials, especially with perspective and achieving depth. The book is easy to read and it covers all the main problems illustrators may face. It also gives step-by-step tutorials for some digital

paintings. With its help I improved my technique and also solved some of the problems my paintings had.

However, representation of different materials is still my weakness. When painting I need a lot of time for that part and mostly I am just experimenting and trying different solutions to find out which one is the best. Thus this is an issue that still needs more practise.

3.4 Illustration process

My illustration process usually followed the same pattern every time. I will present it as an example of one of my paintings, named “Red Forest Path”. This illustration is actually a digital remake of one of my older acrylic colour paintings, but the process does not differ from my other digital illustrations. I chose this painting also as a book cover, but I will write more about that later.

3.4.1 Step 1: Preparation and sketching

My digital paintings started with setting the canvas in Photoshop. For book illustrations I used A3 size canvas, even though the book format will probably be around A5 size. Illustrating on a bigger canvas makes drawing details easier with zooming-in option. The size can be always adjusted to smaller, but it is impossible to make bitmap images bigger after they are done. I made mostly portrait images instead of landscape – simply because of the book layout (I am not considering to have some special book shape and size because the usual portrait rectangle is just the easiest to read, carry around and store on shelves). I used the RGB colour scheme.

Sketching was mostly done directly in Photoshop on a canvas I later painted. Usually pencil-like line sketch was done first with a basic soft-edged brush in dark grey or black colour on a bright-coloured canvas (Picture 11). The brush

was set with opacity and size dependant on the pen pressure. The sketch was always put on a separate Photoshop layer. Usually those sketches were really brief, just showing the perspective and basic objects on a painting.

However, sometimes also other methods were used to start my illustrations. The painting called “Tsaami Temple” (Appendix 2) was started with a rendered 3D building that I made in Photoshop, and continued with large brush colour strokes to put the temple into the environment. Sometimes I skipped sketching altogether.



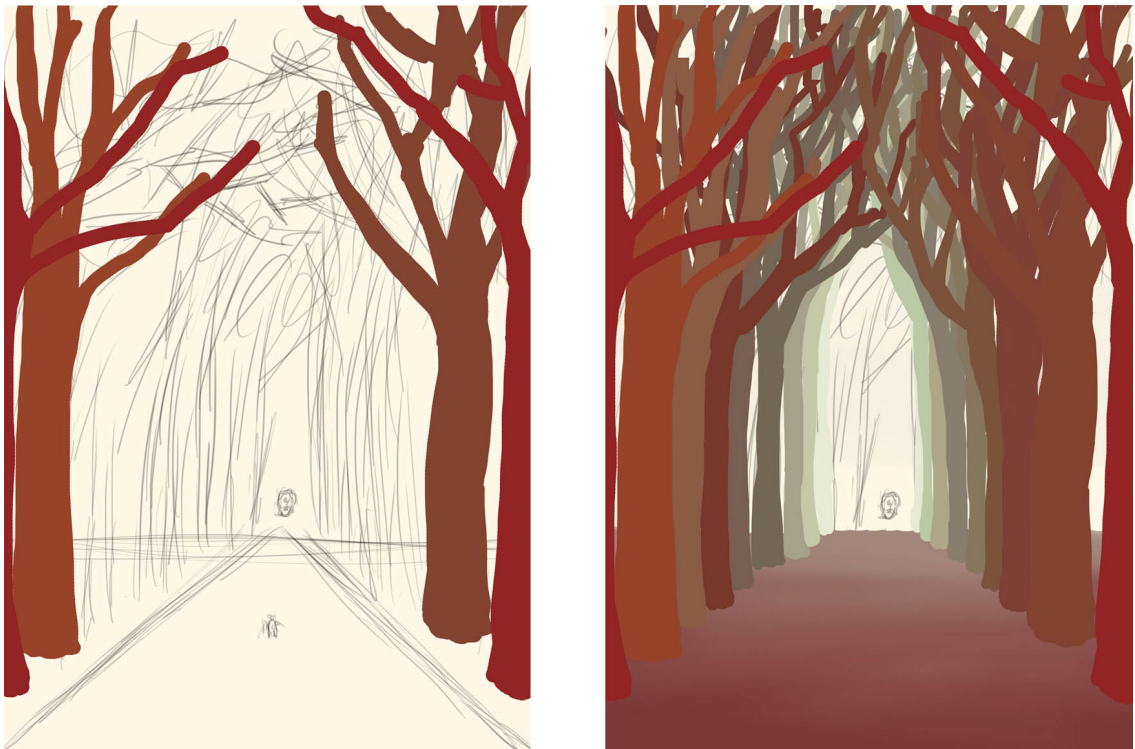
Picture 11. Illustration process, step 1: sketching.

3.4.2 Step 2: Colouring objects and putting them in layers

When the brief sketch had been done each object was coloured separately, on a different layer (Picture 10). At this time the objects were made using round hard-edged brush and one colour. The background layer was left empty or just

Painted in one colour with a paint bucket tool. Few times in my illustration process happened that the first step (pencil-like sketch) was skipped and just the painting began with putting coloured objects in separate layers.

As visible on Picture 12, on the “Red Forest Path” the trees were coloured first and put in the same time in different layers. After that the ground was added - a bit lighter and less saturated in the back. In this step I paid a lot of attention to the perspective and try to get the colours right depending how close or far in the painting an object is. Because each object was in the different layer they can be later easily modelled and changed if needed.



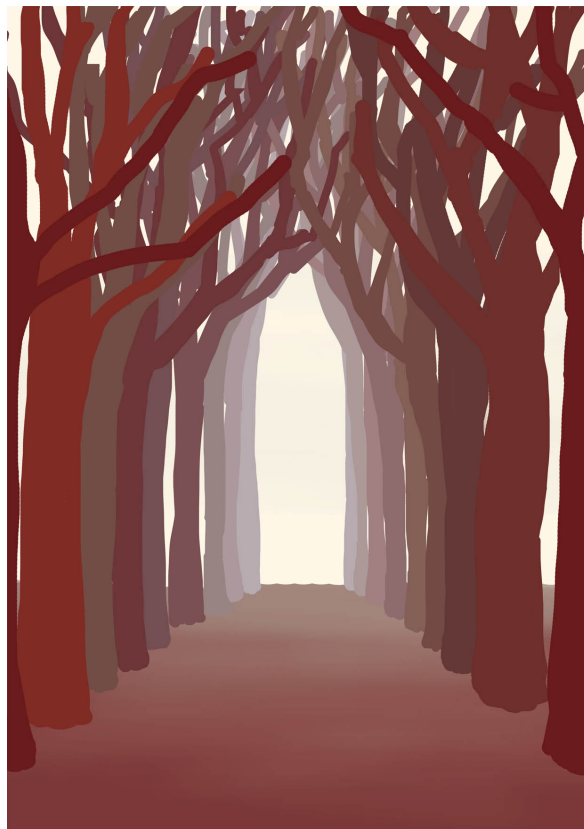
Picture 12. Illustration process, step 2: colouring the objects and putting them in the separate layers.

3.4.3 Step 3: Changing the colours (if needed)

After all the objects were coloured and in separate layers the whole colour scheme is rechecked. If some colours did not fit into the whole I changed them.

Usually this was done with changing hue, saturation and brightness levels of a particular layer (Picture 13). This way is quite easy to see which colour fits the most with the rest of the image. Sometimes the background colours had to be changed because the painting needed a better perspective and depth.

On the “Red Forest Path” I changed the colours of trees in the back because they did not fit with the perspective before. I changed the saturation value and the hue. On this step I also made the sketch layer invisible because I did not need it anymore.



Picture 13. Illustration process, step 3: changing the colours.

3.4.4 Step 4: Modelling the objects

In this step the objects were modelled. The texture is drawn to each object and with it the materials are imitated. After that shadows and highlights were drawn (Picture 14).

For the textures I used different kinds of brushes. I usually started with the basic round soft-edged brush with opacity and line thickness depending on pen pressure. After that I added lines with various different brushes, depending on the texture. I made shadows and highlights with basic round soft-edged brush with just opacity depending on the pen pressure. Lastly I used the Median filter tool for the objects in second and third plane so the lines were not so sharp. The whole process of modelling took most of the time.

As an example of illustration I modelled first the trees, making the bark texture and shadows. Then I put some gradient to the backlight. In the end I modelled the ground with texture and leaves. In this case I used a custom made brush for leaves. The custom made brush was made by putting a part of painting into the brush so it can be easily multiplied. For this leaf brush I carefully drew three leaves in different positions in a separate canvas and turned it all into a brush.



Picture 14. Illustration process, step 4: modelling.

3.4.5 Step 5: Adding the missing objects and more details

When the basic objects were modelled I added more details to the painting so it did not look empty. At this point I also added some smaller objects that are still missing (Picture 15). Those were usually the objects that I had not been not sure in the beginning how to include them or what colours to use. Since the scenery or the landscape had been done at this point I was able to include also those smaller objects. At that point I also added more light and shadows, even though I had a source and angle of light in mind already before.

On the example illustration I added the dim sunrays, few leafs on the trees and two figures – a woman on the forest path and an owl, a symbol of wisdom, in the back. I drew those figures in the same way as all the objects described in the previous steps - I first made a brief sketch, then added colours and modelled it. I added the layers with those new figures in between the tree layers, so they were in front of a backlight and behind the first sunrays.

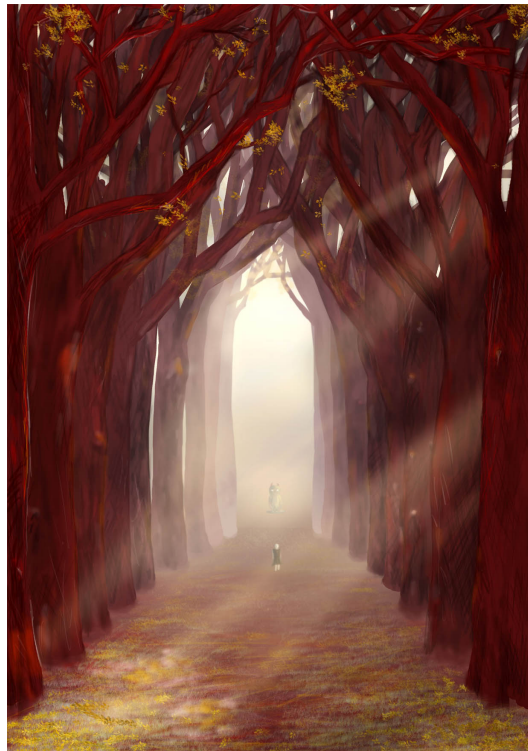


Picture 15. Illustration process, step 5: adding the missing objects and more details.

3.4.6 Step 6: Merging the layers and adjusting levels, hue, saturation, brightness and contrast

When the drawing process had been done and nothing was to be added anymore, all the layers were merged together. In case some particular object needs to be changed later, or something needs to be added, the picture with merged layers was saved as another document. This new file was then ready for the final steps, where I adjusted the different picture values. In this step I first adjusted levels to get rid of unnecessary greyness. After that I checked the hue and saturation. Usually hue stayed the same or was moved just for one percent or two. Saturation depends on each case. Sometimes I desaturated the image a bit or I saturated it. Next the adjustment of the brightness and contrast were done. In most of the cases also more contrast was added (Picture 16).

On the example illustration I adjusted levels a bit. I kept the hue as it was, but added a bit of saturation. I also added a bit of contrast.

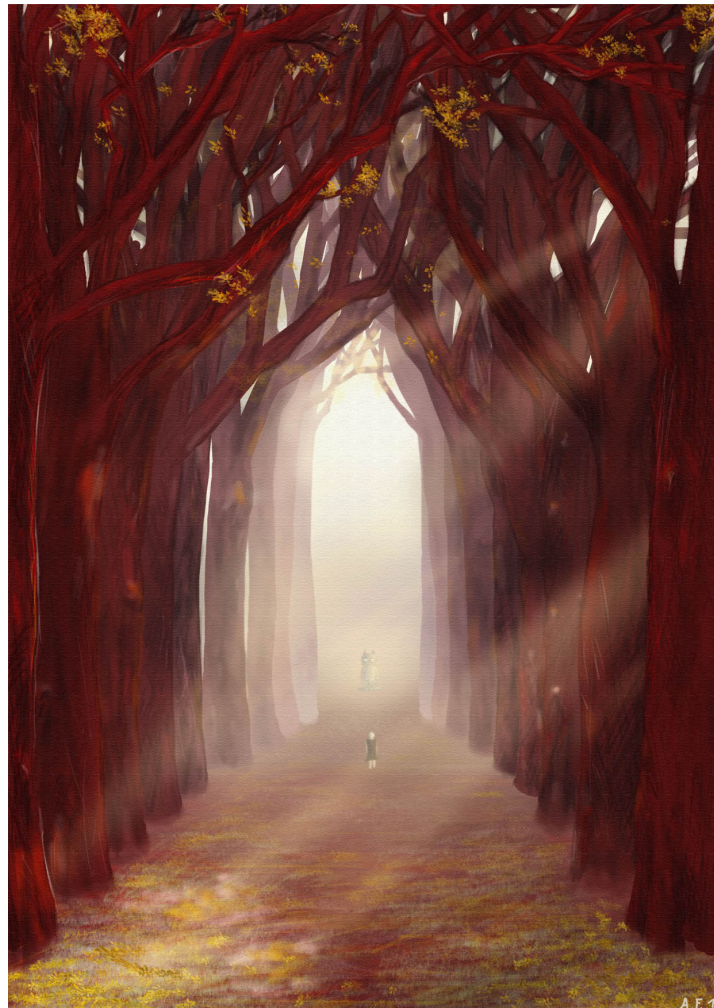


Picture 16. Illustration process, step 6: merging the layers and adjusting levels, hue, saturation, brightness and contrast.

3.4.7 Step 7: Adding blur and filters

If I was still not satisfied with the illustration I tried to use blur in the back or tilt-shift. Sometimes I went also through the Filter gallery and tried out if some filter would fit the image. After that the illustration is done (Picture 17).

For the example illustration the “Watercolor” filter was used and its opacity was put to 30% on top of the basic image. After that both layers were merged again and “Texturizer” filter was used. The image was finished with the signature in the lower right corner.

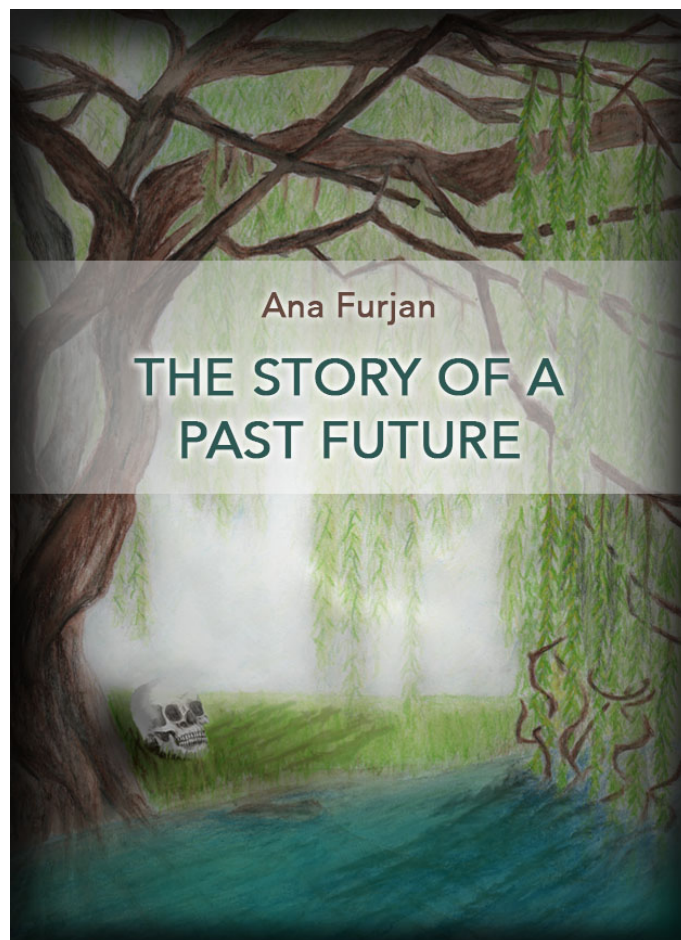


Picture 17. Final illustration. After step 7 (adding blur and filters) illustration is done.

On average I needed around 25-30 hours of work for each illustration. Some paintings needed more and some less. Normally around 1-2 hours were spent on illustration per day, so it took a few weeks to finish it. The step-by-step drawing process without text is shown in Appendix 1. All of the final book illustrations can be seen in chapter 4.1 and Appendix 2.

3.5 Book cover development

As my style changed and I developed as an illustrator I wanted also a better cover for my book. First I tried to improve the first cover I made for *The Story of a Past Future* (Picture 7), but I had still problems with typography (Picture 18) and did not like the way it looked.



Picture 18. Repairing the first book cover.

Next I tried to make a cover from one of my earlier paintings, “Wisdom” (Picture 19). The painting looked a bit better after I corrected the colour saturation and added a few additional details to the background, but it was still not good enough. Another problem was that neither of those two earlier illustrations was made digitally, so the style differed from other artwork.



Picture 19. Cover made from earlier painting, Wisdom (acrylic colours).

In the end I decided to remake “Wisdom” and use computer as a medium. The entire process is described in chapter 4.4. I liked the end result much more, so I decided that this could be a book cover (see Picture 20 for the smaller and Appendix 3 for the bigger final cover). After finishing the illustration itself I added the typography. I wanted to have on the cover just my name and title. The publishing house might add also their logo. Even though it might not be visible, it took me few hours of trials before I finally decided how to put the text.

4 RESULTS

4.1 The final book cover and illustrations

Illustrations for one book have to be made in the same style. When one is making drawings and paintings otherwise, the style can change from creation to creation, but book illustrations have to “speak the same language”. I was drawing a lot for *The Story of a Past Future*. Since my style was still developing I had in the end a lot of illustrations that did not fit together. In the summer of 2014 I developed my final style for the illustrations and tried to make all the paintings from then on that way. At the time the thesis is being written I have six illustrations ready and I am planning to continue with more after. For the final illustrations in bigger format see Appendix 2.

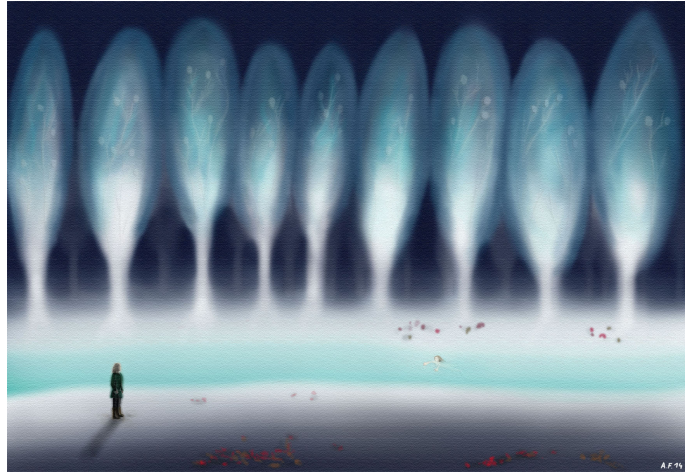
I chose one of these illustrations, Red Forest Path, for a book cover (Picture 20 and Appendix 3). On this illustration Iri, one of the main characters, walks on a path towards knowledge. I tried to make trees in this painting huge comparing to the figure. Owl on the end of the wide path represents knowledge.

Illustration called Dream River (Picture 21) is the remake of one of my earlier ink and pencil paintings. It looks somehow unreal on purpose because in the story



Picture 20. The final cover.

this scene is happening in one of the main characters' dreams. Because of the book's format it might happen I will need to **prilagoditi** it to form landscape to portrait format.



Picture 21. Dream River

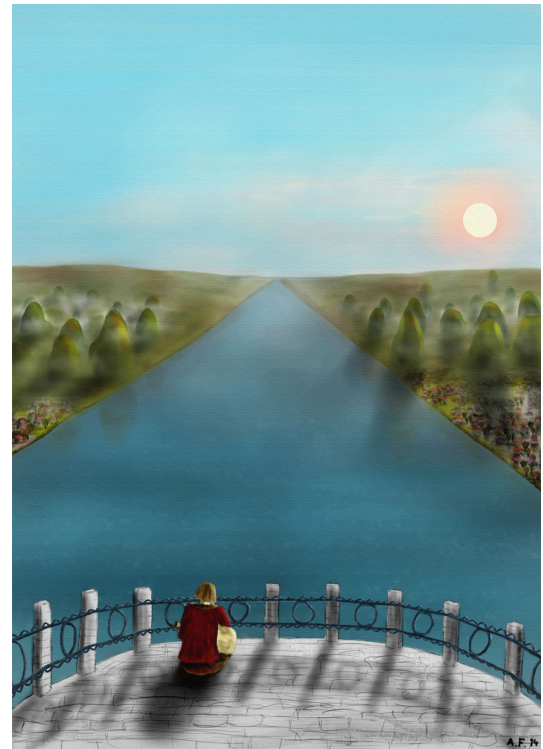
Illustration called Million Candles (Picture 22) is

made for the book Prologue where a man is fighting with an endless forest for whole day. This painting was made the fastest since I was just experimenting at first without purpose to make a real illustration.

City Under Samanis (Picture 23) is an illustration where bard Tarin, one of the main characters, is taking a leave from Nour, a beloved city where he spent a



Picture 22. Million Candles



Picture 23. City Under Samanis

lot of time. This illustration is more colourful and I first tried to add some filters to make it duller, but then decided to leave it as it is.

Tsaami Temple (Picture 24) illustration fits to the chapter when Lauri, one of the main characters, arrives on far north to learn more about the legendary Liath's skull. I started this painting making a basic 3D temple shape in Photoshop. After that I put the temple into an environment and model trees.

Village on the Edge (Picture 25) is a painting of few houses high in the Border Mountains. In the story *The Winged Ones*, humans with wings, live here. This is a painting I started without line-like sketch. In the beginning I just put each mountaintop in different layer and then modelled it. Here I had the most problems creating a wall-like texture on the front mountain.



Picture 24. Tsaami Temple



Picture 25. Village on th Edge

4.2 Map of Terra

The sketch of a map of Terra was drawn already when my book writing process started. Because the story is happening in different lands and cities and the figures move all the time, the map made it easier for me to write. This way I am able to calculate the distances and plan what will happen next. But the map is also a useful tool for a reader when following the story and checking where the places described are. This is the reason why the map of Terra, the world, is important in the book and it should be there even without other illustrations.

As I wrote earlier, my first attempt to make the real map of Terra was in 2011 (Picture 5). Even though I think it was not really bad I wanted to make it again, this time digitally as all the other artwork for the book (see Picture 25 for smaller and Appendix 2 for bigger map). To achieve this I used the old map as a base and drew the continent, islands, roads, borders, cities, mountains and forests on it using Photoshop layers. After that I made text layers and wrote names of the lands, cities and other important landmarks.



Picture 26. The map of Terra

The map was the hardest to make in the same style as other illustrations because it had to be precise and easily readable in the first place. It also took more time than other illustrations, but I am satisfied with the end result. It might happen that I will have to add more landmarks later on, as my story develops.

4.3 Book design

I decided I do not want to put my illustrations in the middle of the text in the book, but to put them just at the beginning of each chapter. I wanted to design the beginning of each chapter in a way that the illustration will be one with the text (colour, typography, margins, text-wrap, etc.). In the end I made quite a simple style for the book chapters' beginnings (Picture 27). The illustration is on the left page and the chapter title and beginning of the text on right, next to the illustration. I left the typography and text colour the same in each chapter. Examples of bigger final page openings can be seen in Appendix 4.



Picture 27. Example of the final book design

5 DISCUSSION

Illustrations are still popular in fantasy books. Nowadays digital illustration is one of the most used forms in that field. Digital illustration brought many new options for illustrations and it can be also much easier to make.

The Story of a Past Future fits into a fantasy genre for teenagers and adults. Even though I tried to make illustrations for it first through other techniques, I found out that my digital illustrations are far better and fit more with the book. However, I started to draw digitally just recently, so I still had some problems during my illustration process. My style was also still developing.

I drew almost every day in an attempt to get better and get the style I wanted. Even though I had no particular artist in mind I knew approximately what I wanted to achieve. In this process good observation of nature, places, materials and light helped, as well as watching other people's work. I always tried to find what my problems were so I would know how to fix them.

I developed also with working with freelancing where customers gave me their viewpoints about my work. I found out that some of them even encourage plagiarism to some extent. In my opinion an artist can get inspiration from others, but they should not copy it. The line here is really thin, but I think we all know somewhere inside when we cross it, and thus avoid it.

My illustration process mostly follows the same pattern every time. Everything, from sketch on, is made on computer. The first steps are important for composition and colours, and later I try to model the objects and draw the details. To develop the best way to make an illustration also some literature helped me, as well as it helped me develop some issues I had with my paintings. I became better at drawing a perspective and adding depth to the paintings. I started to use more tools in Photoshop, which was also visible on my illustrations.

The book cover might be the first thing a potential reader sees on a book, so it plays an important role. Researches show that the book covers are essential for the books to reach readers. Thus the cover for *The Story of a Past Future* was for me the most important part of the design. I made many covers, and in the end I chose an illustration that fit the purpose and designed it for the cover. Even though there is still space for development I am satisfied with the end result. Most importantly, I think it attracts the right audience. However, I am still considering if I should change the name of the book so it would fit with more with the contents.

Another important thing for my book is the map of Terra, the world, in which the story is happening. I had the first map done already few years ago, but I wanted to improve it and make it in the same style as the rest of illustrations. In the end I succeed with some experimenting. The map should be in the book even if the other illustrations are not. In this case the publishing of the book will be much cheaper, and at least for now this option seems also more likely. My project for the future is thus to make the map in black and white for this case.

The final book design was not so hard to make. For me the most important in this part was that the page contents followed logically, the margins were the right size and the book was easily readable. I wanted the book design to be simple and aesthetic. For now I have done just the example design for the first few pages. I can finish it when I am done with writing.

Overall I learned a lot in my book illustration and design process and I think this is the most important achievement. I developed my own style and myself as an illustrator. I fixed some problems I had in the beginning and became more confident with my drawing. If I compare now the illustrations I started with for *The Story of a Past Future* and the final ones I can see a big difference. I like the final illustrations much more than the first ones.

As I will continue with writing my book I will make also more illustrations. As already mentioned, I will also make a map of Terra for the black and white book edition. But other than *The Story of a Past Future* project my biggest goal is to

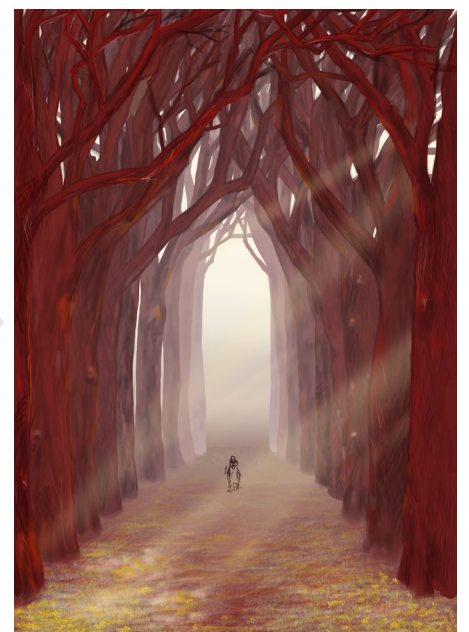
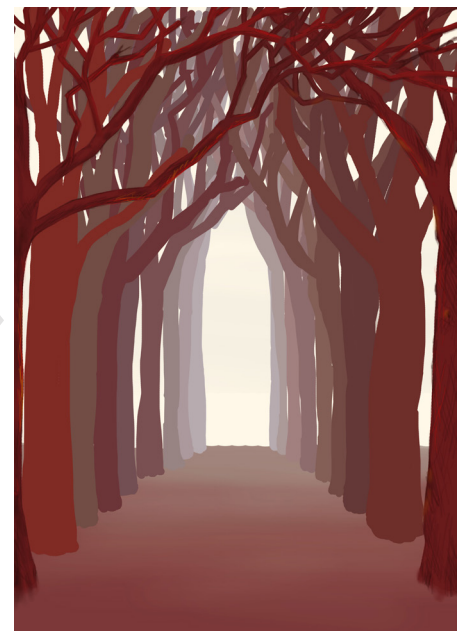
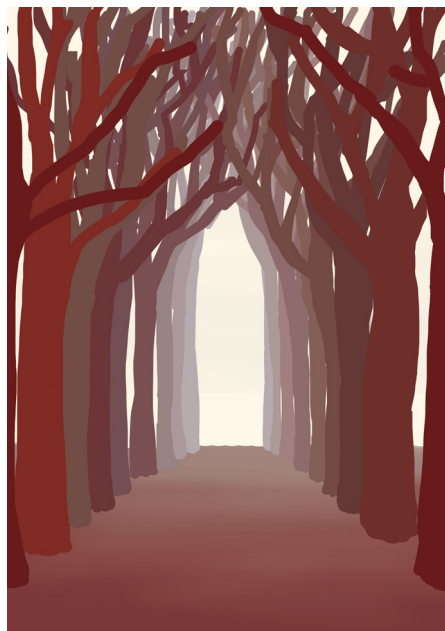
keep drawing and try to develop further. I think the learning process never ends and that I will see more mistakes and want to learn more in the future.

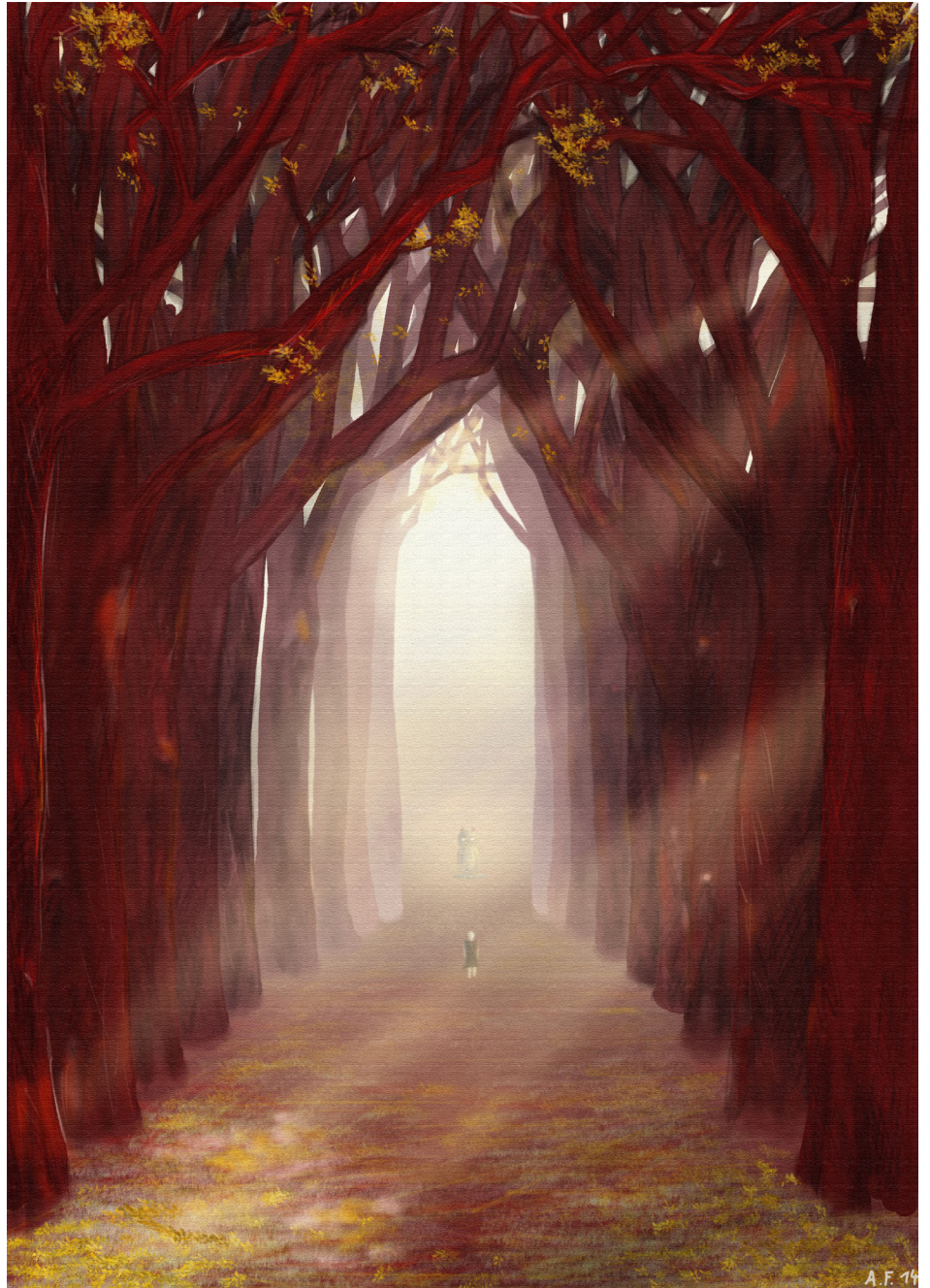
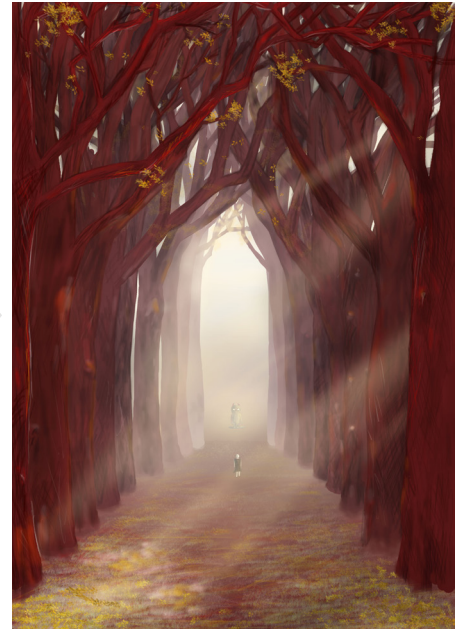
6 CONCLUSION

Illustration will continue to develop and styles will continue to be numerous. Illustrations for different purposes also change with time. Right now the fantasy illustration style is quite recognizable and defined. However, I think the biggest achievement is to step out of this definition and create something different that would fit to the purpose as well. Some illustrators have a really recognizable style. In the future I hope I will develop also my style so far and bring something fresh to the world of illustration, this world of no borders. But first step is to know the rules in order to break them. Through the illustrations for *The Story of a Past Future* and research I have done for this thesis I made one big step towards this goal.

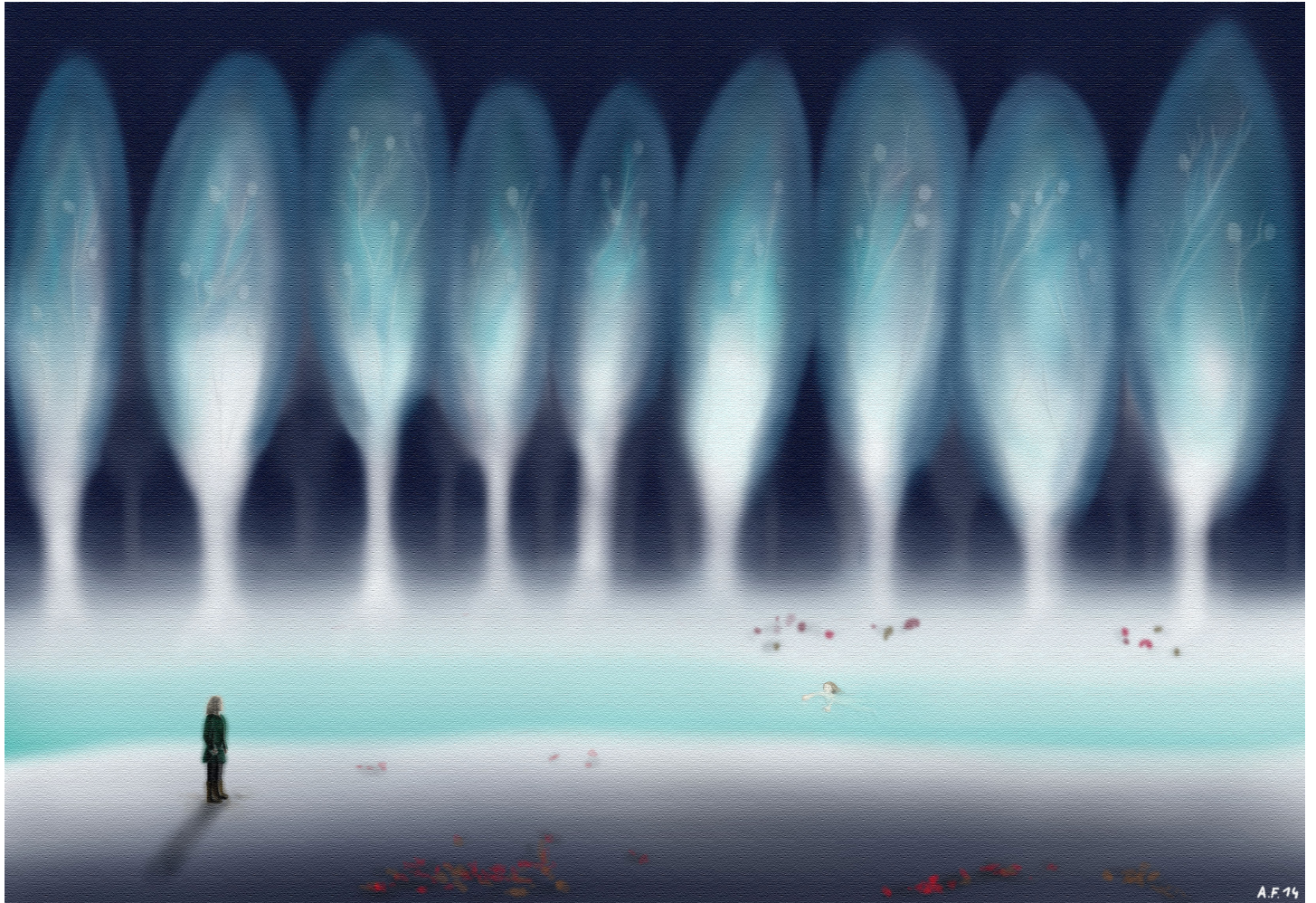
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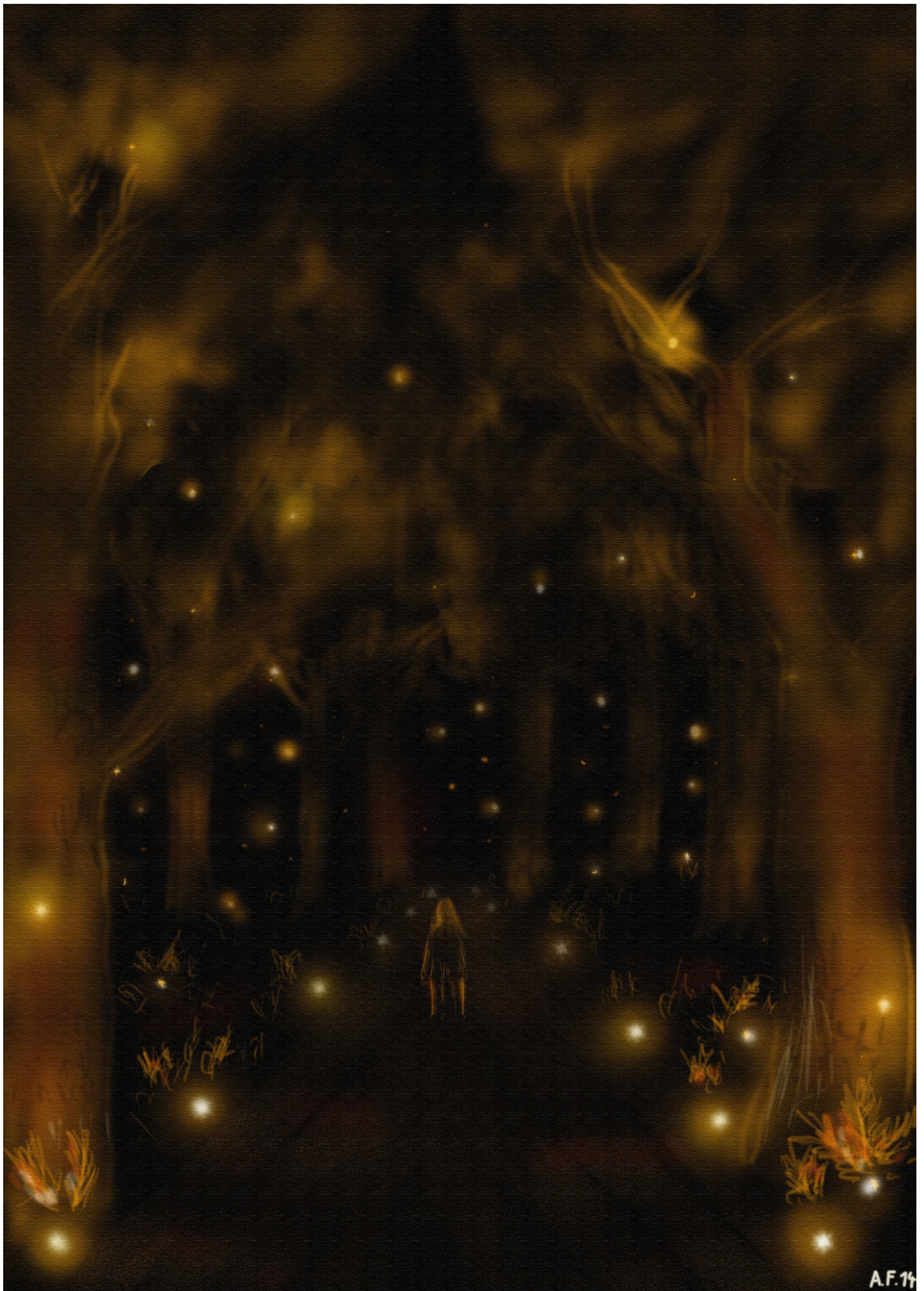
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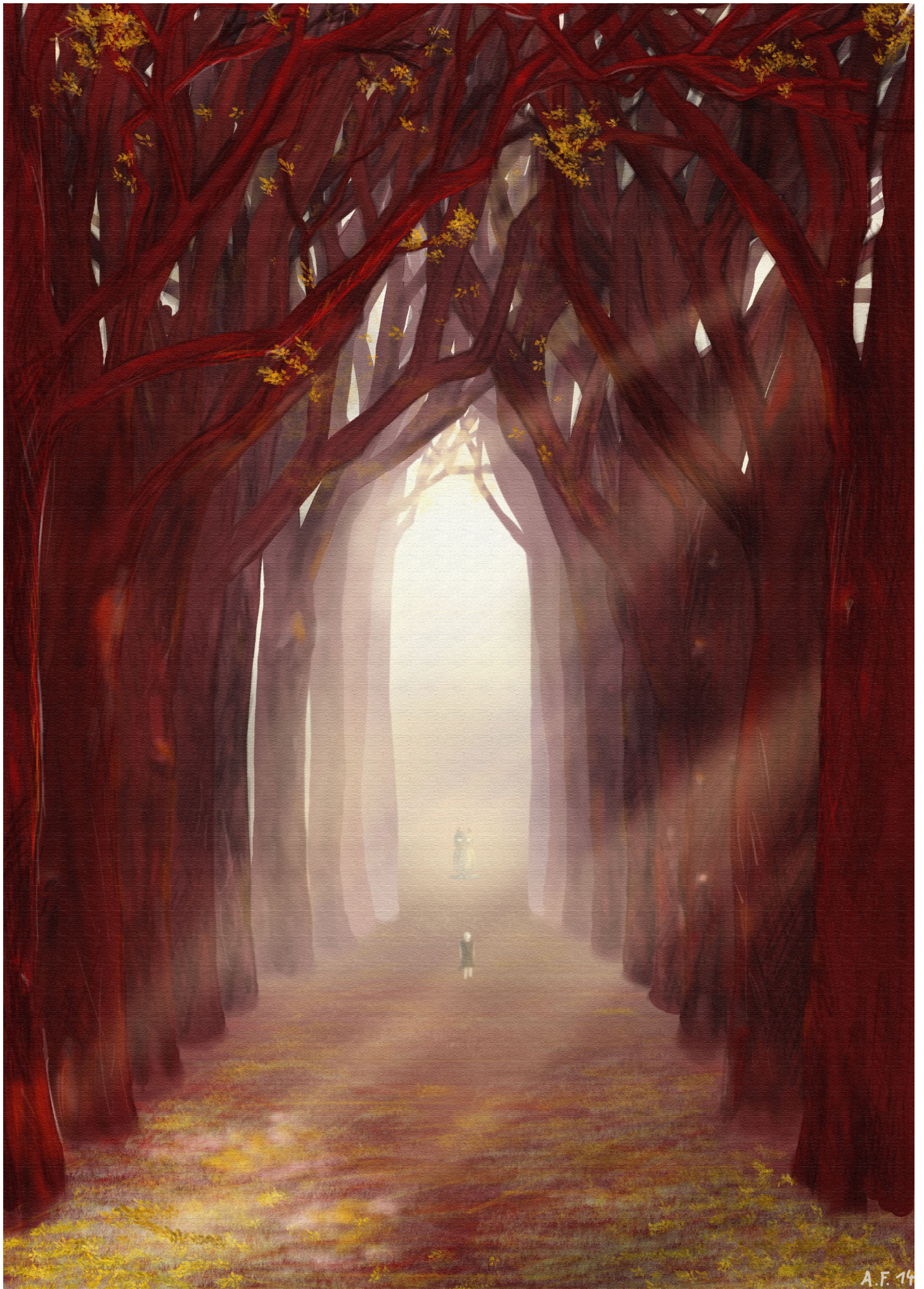


Dream River



















2

The Harbinger

The road was taking Tarin from eastern city, Nour, lying at the lower stream of the river Moan, towards wilderness beyond The Endless Forest. Nour was one of the biggest cities of the land of Hawen, which can be translated as “near sea” or even “chosen by the sea”. The people in this land were considered a bit strange by Palads, for they had no king or other governor to lead them. They loved the sea and worshiped it. Nour was one of the few cities in Hawen not lying by the sea. There flew the river Moan instead, which was already quite wide at that point, near uniting with the endless ocean. Nour was famous for its long stone bridge across this river, made as most of the buildings in the city from stone. The bridge was mostly covered with roof, and there was a market place held under. In the middle of the bridge was a stone tower. The top of it was the only place in the city from where it was possible to see all the way to the sea in good weather. The city lied on the south river bank and was made with hundreds of stone houses with orange-yellow roofs. It was surrounded with steep high hills called Samanis, The Holy Ones.

Before he went again on the road with his backpack on the one shoulder and lute on the other, Tarin climbed one last time on the top of the bridge tower to say farewell to the city that gained part of his heart.

It was one of those autumn days when it smelled of snow even though just few clouds covered the bright sun and the gust of wind barely lifted the pine needles. Because it was the time when folk of Nour gathered in the market area on bridge, Tarin met few people on his climb up the tower, but on the top he was alone. Bard stared a long time in the mysterious Samanis, rising high into the sky. Their steep green slopes stayed green all over the year, even under the cover of snow. They said whoever managed to climb to the top of The Holy Ones and eat the fruit of the trees on top felt like god, and whoever caught one of the long leafs that fell in autumn was touched by luck. It never happened to Tarin, but once a small child took the leaf just

in front of him. When he remembered that now, watching the great hills, he smiled as it came to his mind that a kid took luck from him. But Tarin wasn't a person who would fear the future.

From Samanis his gaze went to the great river Moan and followed it to the sea that was so inspiring to the people of Hawen. There were people in Nour who sneaked into some trade ship to come to the sea, to Nerven, and never came back. Some even built their own wooden raft so the river could take them to the endless sea.

But the majority stayed in Nour, saying that the wishes are most beautiful before they are fulfilled, when they exist just in the form of yearning. When they come true they lost their charm. So the people stayed, ever yearning for the far murmur of waves.

The folk of Nour, however, were even in Hawen considered freaks for their desire of solitude. Those people lived in their own worlds even though they had families and friends. They didn't talk much – most of the time they were receding alone in nature. They were most social on the market where they exchange their goods with others, for each of them was involved in some activity that was important for everyone.

A lot of bards thus liked Nour and its weird inhabitants, for they shared their love of solitude. Tarin felt the same, but he knew he wouldn't return any time soon, for people acted as if a poisonous disease would attack them. They were becoming sad and it seemed as their thoughts would stop and they wouldn't find an exit from the endless loop anymore. They didn't change anymore, even though the years passed, and nobody died. There were no new kids either – no younger ones than those who counted three summers at least. All of that could be felt, for the air was filled with their troubles and no one knew how to solve them. That's how otherwise quiet people started to talk more to find a solution, but it was visible that socializing saddened them as much as the disease itself.

Tarin didn't dare to guess how the story of Nour will end. He wished the best to those people, for he understood their suffering even though he wasn't experiencing it. He started to think this all was the consequence of some dark magic, even though Hawens didn't believe in magic. But in his traveling in free lands west of Hawen Tarin saw many times unexplainable tricks from folks there. There he heard even murmurs that on the far south there live evil people, who know dark magic, and with it they can even kill people.

He sighted as he remembered all those good people from his beloved city who were facing those problems now. What he really liked about them was that they all were so unselfish and good by heart. They left others to be as they are and never wanted any harm to anyone.

Long Tarin was standing there, surrounded by beautiful city, Samanis, river Moan and far sea, and his thoughts wander between the beauty of the view and concerns of his mind that accumulated there and felt so foreign to him. The rush of different emotions made him take his lute from the leather bag, sit on the stone floor and with eyes looking far out, wrote *The Disaster under Samanis*. It was a sad song, sang after him by many bards. People who heard him singing came into a tower and quietly listened, and the song moved their hearts. When the bard put down his lute and bowed they knew he was leaving, and that he won't return. They moved away so he could descent down the stone stairs, and thanked him for all the happy moments they shared with his singing. Down on the market people waited for him with bread, meat, vegetables and fruits that they gave him for the way. Somebody even gave him a woollen coat, and Tarin gratefully put it on, for he knew the winter would come soon. He thanked them sincerely for their kindness, wished them favour of the sea, sun and the moon, and took his leave.